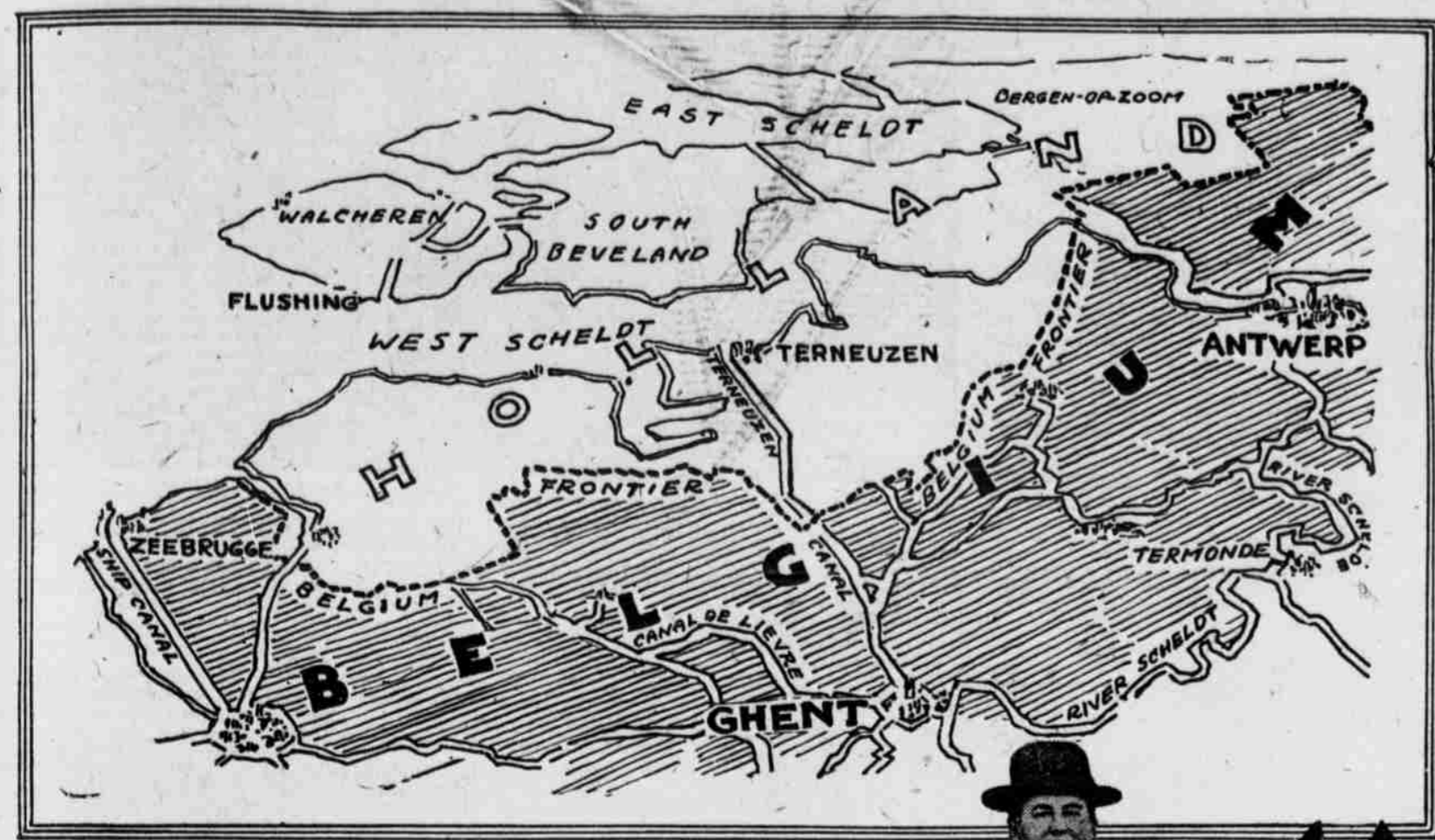


# Belgium's Future May Rest on Albert's Visit

King, Queen and Heir Apparent Face Crisis With Holland Over the Scheldt and Need Economic Backing of America in Reconstruction—Entente Slow to Force German Reparation—International Politics Cause Serious Situation



By F. CUNLIFFE-OWEN.

WHILE the cable despatches from Brussels, to the effect that Holland had broken off diplomatic relations with Belgium have received a denial from the Dutch Envoy in Paris, Jonkheer Van Swinderen, there is no getting over the fact that the tension between Brussels and The Hague continues unabated. The Netherlands have shown no disposition to comply with the demands made by Belgium, and which have received the approval of the other Powers of the Entente, while the very fact that the two kingdoms should be unrepresented by ministers plenipotentiary in their respective capitals, is not calculated to convey the impression that the attitude of the two Governments toward one another is characterized by much cordiality. Indeed, the crisis concerning the Scheldt, the Terneuzen Canal, and the Dutch enclave of Limburg, continues unabated. It affects the entire political and economic future of Belgium, whose prosperity, and whose safety from invasion by the Germans are wholly dependent on a satisfactory settlement. It is no exaggeration to assert that the very national life of Belgium is at stake. That her gallant ruler should have chosen this particular time, when his presence at Brussels would appear to be of such surpassing importance, to voyage across the Atlantic, makes it manifest that his visit to America is not one of mere courtesy, nor yet a pleasure tour.

## Averse to Entertaining.

King Albert, who is due at Hoboken with his Queen and his eldest son, the young Duke of Brabant, this afternoon or tomorrow, has already intimated that he is averse to banquets and festivities, which he insists neither the time nor the occasion warrant. The purpose of his coming to this country is a serious one. It is to seek, by a personal appeal to the Administration and to popular sentiment in the United States the practical help for his country which he has been unable thus far to find in Europe. It is political and economic backing that Belgium desires from the United States. She needs it in her differences with Holland. She needs it to obtain the reparation agreed to by Germany at Versailles. She needs it for her industrial and commercial reconstruction now at a standstill for lack of funds, or foreign credits and of raw materials. That is the real purpose of the visit to America of King Albert, with his consort and heir apparent. Upon the success of his mission depends the future of Belgium.

While Great Britain, France and Italy are entirely in sympathy with the demands made by Belgium upon the Netherlands in connection with the estuary of the Scheldt, the Terneuzen Canal and the province of Limburg, they realize that short of actual recourse to arms it would be well-nigh impossible to bring Holland to terms without the cooperation of the United States. None of the Allies is disposed to invade Holland by land or by sea, nor yet to revive the war. To use force with Holland would be to arouse a sympathy in her behalf which does not now exist. But there should be no compunction about organizing an economic boycott against her if she continues to refuse to listen to reason. None of the Allies can entertain kindly feelings toward her. Throughout the Great War her neutrality was of the most hostile description toward us and quite unduly friendly toward Germany. Indeed, the flagrancy of the violations of neutrality of which she rendered herself guilty in behalf of Germany, by furnishing her with supplies which she had been allowed by us to import from the Dutch, on the distinct understanding that they were destined for exclusively domestic consumption, undoubtedly impaired the efficiency of our blockade of the enemy and of protection of the Great War. Had it not been for the Dutch upon neutrality the war might have been brought to a close many months prior to November, 1918.

It is not the Dutch people who have been so much to blame but their Government, as well as the aristocracy and the higher officers of army and navy. Queen Wilhelmina, while endeavoring to be impartial, is devoted to her husband and to her mother, the widowed Queen Emma. Both are Germans by birth and have remained so in spite of their Dutch citizenship. Queen Emma is a daughter of the German former sovereign house of Waldeck, while the Prince Consort is a scion of the fallen Grand Ducal dynasty of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. He was serving as an officer of the Prussian Jaegers of the Guard at Potsdam until his marriage, and has continued the close intimacy which he then formed with ex-Emperor William. He remains the typical Prussian officer with all the prejudices, arrogance and narrow-mindedness of that particular military caste. In Holland the people have always refused to take him to their hearts. During the war his advocacy of Germany's cause was so pronounced that the diplomatic representatives of the Allies were compelled to protest. He lost no opportunity of abusing King Albert for fighting Germany, and of gloating over the sufferings of Belgium and of her royal house.

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## Wilhelmina Is Influenced.

It is idle to argue that Queen Wilhelmina remained insensible to his influence. At any rate the court of The Hague was controlled thereby. The entire atmosphere of the court was, and is, pro-German. With regard to the Dutch aristocracy, the greater portion thereof, particularly the territorial nobility, either own estates in Germany, formerly occupied seats in one or another of the German Houses of Lords, by reason of their landed possessions in the Vaterland, or else are affiliated with the German aristocracy by matrimonial alliances or ancestry. If I recall all this, it is in order to point out that in the refusal of Holland to make any concession to the just and moderate demands of Belgium, it is in part due to the intense bitterness, entertained at the court of The Hague against King Albert and Queen Elizabeth, who some time ago when questioned about her German relatives, proclaimed that she had "closed the door upon them for ever," and that never as long as she lived would she resume any sort of intercourse with them after the frightful treatment to which Germany had subjected the land of her adoption, namely Belgium.

## These Are Belgium's Grievances.

As for Belgium's grievances against Holland, they are based primarily on the commercial rivalry of the Dutch port of Rotterdam, with the Belgian port of Antwerp. Injury to Antwerp spells prosperity to Rotterdam. If Antwerp can be put out of business, then Rotterdam becomes virtually the only Continental seaport bordering on the English Channel and the southern waters of the North Sea. That is why the Dutch have always sought to obstruct access from the sea to Antwerp, even during the fifteen years or more that Belgium was subject to the Dutch crown, before achieving her independence. Since then, despite her treaty obligations, guaranteed and endorsed by Great Britain, France and Germany, Holland has pursued the same selfish policy. All the lower portion of the estuary of the Scheldt passes through territory that geographically and racially should have been included in Belgium at the time of her organization as an independent kingdom, but which had been left to Holland. The Dutch have taken advantage of this to not only refrain from either improving, or even maintaining, navigation of the lower reaches of the Scheldt, but to prevent the Belgians from deepening the river. The result of this policy has been to hamper access from the sea to Antwerp, to a very alarming extent.

## Ghent's Progress Hampered.

The important city of Ghent, for hundreds of years past a great centre of trade and industry, and also of an extensive network of the inland navigation of Belgium, is connected with the sea for ocean-going shipping by means of a canal, which finds its outlet in Dutch territory at Terneuzen, near the mouth of the Scheldt. Holland is bound by treaty obligations to keep her twenty miles of the Terneuzen Canal in a proper state of repair. She has refused to live up to her engagements in the matter, with the result that whereas the Belgian stretch of the canal is wide and deep enough

WHY FREEDOM OF THE SCHELDT IS VITAL TO BELGIUM



to admit of seagoing shipping reaching Ghent, the Dutch and smaller portion thereof has been permitted to silt up, and to diminish in depth, so as to prevent any vessels, save those of the lightest tonnage, from making their way up to that city.

The Belgians had been led by the Powers of the Entente to believe that they would be awarded all that portion of Dutch territory to the south of the Scheldt which is cut off from the kingdom of the Netherlands by the river. That would have placed the entire stretch of the Terneuzen Canal from its northern outlet down to Ghent under her dominion, and would have given her, at any rate, joint control with Holland of the mouth of the Scheldt, a river which is the principal artery of her trade. The award to her of this territory would have been an appropriate recognition of the magnificent service she rendered to the cause of the Entente. It would have been a just retribution inflicted by the Allies upon Holland for her unfriendly attitude throughout the war.

But there was procrastination on the part of the peace conference at Paris. The consideration of the rights and needs of Belgium was altogether unduly delayed, and whereas at the time of the signing of the armistice Holland would have been willing to make any territorial sacrifice in the hope of averting the vengeance of the Entente, which she feared, the eleven months that have passed since then have to such an extent allayed her apprehensions and encouraged her insouciance that she now actually refuses to consider any plan for the neutralization of the lower reaches of the Scheldt and for the improvement of the navigation either of the river or of the Terneuzen Canal. The position in which Belgium, therefore now finds herself, after all the cruel sacrifices which she has made, for

the cause of the Entente, is so intolerable that it cannot be any longer endured. For as long as Holland is permitted to retain the absolute and exclusive sovereignty not alone of the banks, but also of the waters of the lower reaches of the Scheldt and of the northern third of the Terneuzen Canal, ready to shut them off at any moment, she retains a strangle hold upon the trade and industry of Belgium.

## Belgium Robbed of Limburg.

Then there is the question of Limburg, which, prior to the Treaty of Vienna, formed part of Belgium. The Congress of Vienna, in the most arbitrary fashion, awarded the whole of Belgium and Limburg to King William I. of the Netherlands. When the Belgians revolted against his misrule in 1830, and won their independence the Limburgers, like the people of Luxembourg, sided with the Belgians, and were represented for a time in the Belgian Parliament at Brussels. But at the subsequent Congress of the Peace Powers on the subject of Belgium, the intrigues of the then King Frederick William III. of Prussia in behalf of his kinsman, the King of Holland, prevailed, and Limburg, and Luxembourg were arbitrarily awarded by the Great Powers to the Netherlands, without any regard to the protests of the populations. The southern portion of Limburg forms an enclave between German and Belgian territory, which in places is so narrow—not more than a few miles wide—that the Netherlands Government has recognized the impossibility of defending it from any attack from the east. She was not even able to maintain its neutrality during the great war, through which it was violated nearly every hour in the twenty-four by Germany, who traversed it with troops, munitions, and supplies of every kind, and who was able after her defeat, to escape unhindered across this portion of Dutch territory, with baggage, guns, cattle and all the plunder carried off from Belgium. Belgium de-



KING, QUEEN and HEIR TO THE THRONE ON A BELGIAN AVIATION FIELD.

QUEEN WILHELMINA OF HOLLAND



QUEEN MOTHER OF HOLLAND



PRINCE HENRY OF HOLLAND

mands for her future safety, that at any rate this southern portion of Limburg—a province in which less than 40 per cent. are Dutch—should be ceded to her, in order that she may be able to protect her now entirely undefended eastern frontier against any repetition of the frightfulness of

of King Albert's visit to the United States, as pointed out with eloquence by Cardinal Mercier, in Germany every factory chimney is now belching forth smoke, every industry is in active operation, every mine swarming with toilers, while foreign shipping, much of it American, is daily entering German ports freighted with raw materials, purchased not by means of cash but through long credits readily granted here and in other Entente countries. But in Belgium there is no smoke, because the Germans wrecked the chimneys before retreating. There is no mining, because the Germans have flooded the mines and destroyed the machinery. The ruins of the factories and of the blast furnaces bear an aspect of death and of desolation, because the machinery has been carried off into Germany; because there is no money available for reconstruction and reshaping; and above all because the Entente nations refuse to accord to Belgian industry the same long term credit that they accorded to Germany. In conversation with some of the leading financiers of New York the all-absorbing theme of their talk was the necessity of "building up Germany." They were all of them intensely patriotic Americans, each of whom had rendered splendid service to their country during the war. Yet they were bent on "building up" again that very Germany, for the destruction of whose insane ambitions for the economic and consequently the political supremacy of the world the great war was undertaken by the Powers of the Entente. Would it not be more politic and above all more right and just to devote our attention to the "building up" of Belgium in an economic sense rather than to the reconstruction of that monstrous German Frankenstein to the destruction of which we sacrificed so many millions of precious lives and such untold billions of treasure?

If King Albert can with the assistance of his fascinating consort, and with the help of Cardinal Mercier, who

has preceded him to America, manage to impress these views upon the Government and the people of America, his mission will not have been in vain. The life and death of Belgium depend upon its success.

No reference to the visit of the Belgian rulers would be complete without a few brief words about their first-born, the Duke of Brabant, who has accompanied them to America, where, according to present arrangements, he will spend his eighteenth birthday, thereby attaining his legal majority. Assuredly no lad, royal or otherwise, has received such an extraordinary education, which has matured him far beyond his years. For the period of the great war was spent by him, partly at the historic English college of Eton, and partly in the front line trenches, rifle in hand, serving as a private in the ranks, and constantly under the heaviest German fire. The King and Queen are passionately devoted to their boy. But with that heroism, and spirit of self-sacrifice which won for them the admiration of the entire world during the great conflict, they did not consider that they had any right to spare the lad from those perils and hardships which so many other Belgian boys were undergoing in the defence of their beloved country, and of the honor of the Belgian flag. During the first two years of the war, only his school holidays were spent on the battle front in Flanders. After that, he declined absolutely to remain any longer at Eton, while his countrymen were fighting, and continued to serve in the trenches and in the final advance against the enemy until the conclusion of the armistice. And now his father, who has never forgotten the advantages which he derived from the months which he spent touring in the United States, under an incognito, just twenty-one years ago, has arranged to put the finishing touches upon the education of his heir, by a tour in America.

## Lotteries and State Debts.

FRANCE, a cable despatch tells us, is considering paying off her large war debt by means of a lottery. The proposal was advanced in the Chamber of Deputies by M. Labrousse, who attributes the idea to Signor Luzzatti, financial expert of the Italian Peace Mission. Lotteries always have made a great appeal to the people of France. They are far easier to operate among Latins than direct or even high indirect taxation. Latins do not like to pay taxes, but if instead of turning over their money as an enforced gift they run the chance of getting it back multiplied many times they part with it easily.

The best proof of the money making possibilities of the lottery may be seen in the interest taken in the discussion of it. Americans of a short generation's recollection will not need to be reminded what an army of confirmed lottery patrons there were when the old Louisiana Lottery was running. England has tried in her very moral law to compromise with the lottery idea in her Victory Loan, calling the bonds "premium bonds." The "premiums" were too small, however, and the fact that the loan was really a

lottery was too well disguised to permit of success, thereby spoiling a good loan, making a poor gambling proposition and failing to clear more than a third of the floating debt.

The French hope to do better. By making the country frankly into a national gambling house, the Government permitting no other forms of gambling, they hope to put the country on a sound financial basis. They intend to make national finance into a game and make restoring bankrupt France a pleasure. France has no reformers to frown. If the scheme is rejected it will not be on moral grounds.

Lotteries for raising public funds are not unusual in Central and South America, and every now and then an alert postal authority brings to light the fact that many a subscriber lives north of the Rio Grande.

It brought a shock to many Londoners when somebody informed them that Westminster Bridge was built from the proceeds of a lottery. Then somebody dug up the fact that away back in 1736 Parliament incorporated a lottery through which was raised the money with which the beginnings were made toward establishing the British Museum.

a German invasion. That southern enclave of Dutch Limburg constitutes the back door of Germany into Belgium. The key thereof should be in the hands of King Albert. That is not the sole object and aim